



Illustration by Jeanne R. Janish,
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GRAYIA SPINOSA **SPINY HOPSAGE**

Spiny Hopsage is a rounded, profusely branched shrub that is up to 1.5 m high and has erect or spreading, gray-barked, spine-tipped stems. The fleshy, broadly lance-shaped leaves are 10-25 mm long and have entire margins and a short stalk. Foliage is covered with small, star-shaped hairs that easily rub off. Male flowers are on different plants than females flowers. There are 2-5 small, green, sessile male flowers that are 1-2 mm long with a 4-lobed calyx, 4 stamens, and no petals; they occur in the axils of the smaller upper leaves, or bracts. Female flowers are arranged in small spikes in the upper leaf axils. Each flower has an ovary surrounded by 2 green, nearly circular bracts. When mature, the bracts enlarge to be 8-15 mm wide, and are whitish green to red with thin margins. Flowering and fruiting in May-June.

The combination of fleshy leaves with circular, entire-margined, female fruiting bracts distinguishes this shrub from woody species of *ATRIPLEX*.